

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES  
COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2004 AT 11.00 a.m.  
AT THE PAVILION, MANOR FIELD**

Present : Cllr Mr C Alford (Chairman)  
Cllr Mr A Barnett  
Cllr Mr B Ramsay

**1. Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Cllr Mr L Abraham and Cllr Mr J Gaywood.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes**

RESOLVED: That, the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2004 be approved and signed as a correct record, subject to the following corrections on page 1, item 4 in respect of the audit 2000/01; (1) At the end of the first paragraph add "The Committee noted residents had not provided the Parish Council with a copy of their representation as required by the rules and that this had delayed the resolution of the complaints", and, (2) delete the final sentence in the second paragraph.

**4. Audit 2003/04**

The Committee considered a report on an e mail received from a local government elector in respect of a number of issues relating to the 2002/03 accounts and the Council's February 2004 newsletter.

RESOLVED: That, the Clerk's response be confirmed.

**5. Income and expenditure – 1<sup>st</sup> April to 8<sup>th</sup> September 2004**

The Committee examined a financial report indicating the Council's net position for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 8<sup>th</sup> September 2004 and was satisfied that the income and expenditure was in line with the Council's approved budget. The Committee was pleased to note that future income was likely to increase, largely as a result of increased usage of Manor Field by Hartley De Sales Football Club and New Ash Green Cricket Club.

RESOLVED: That, the financial report for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 8<sup>th</sup> September 2004 be received and noted.

**6. Budget 2005/06**

The Committee considered the draft budget presented by the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee. The Committee gave its initial views on the overall budget and was of the opinion that the total budget should not be increased by more than the rate of inflation.

RESOLVED: That, the draft budget presented by the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee be noted.

**7. Fidelity Guarantee Indemnity Limit**

In response to an enquiry from the Council to raise the fidelity guarantee indemnity cover to £144,000, the Committee noted that the insurers require the Council to confirm whether or not a number of financial checks and controls are

carried out. The Committee examined each of the requirements contained on the proposal form, together with the minimum standards of control required by the Council's insurers, and agreed the response to be given to the insurers in respect of the proposal form, including where necessary, the action to be taken by the Council to ensure compliance with the insurers requirements in respect of both the proposal form and minimum standards of control.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the proposal form be completed and returned to the insurers as set out in appendix 1 attached to these minutes and the Chairman of the Council be authorised to sign the accompanying declaration form and,

(2) the Clerk be asked to ensure the insurers requirements are satisfied by taking the necessary action as set out in appendix 1 attached to these minutes.

#### **8. Interest bearing accounts**

The Committee considered a report detailing the Council's current banking arrangements and compared interest rates available from other accounts offered by the Council's bank with those of its existing accounts. The Committee was satisfied with the interest rates provided by the Council's bank on its existing accounts and saw no reason to change its current banking arrangements at this particular time.

RESOLVED: That, the Council take no further action, but the Committee review the Council's banking arrangements on a regular basis.

#### **9. Office accommodation**

The Committee considered a report on the progress of the relocation of the Parish Office in Hartley Library and expressed its disappointment over the County Council's position in respect of its requirement for the lease on the new office to be completed before permitting the commencement of any building works. By mutually agreeing the head of terms in advance of the execution of the new lease, the Committee hoped the County Council would be willing to review its position.

RECOMMENDED: That,

(1) the report be noted and,

(2) subject to satisfactory completion of negotiations with Kent County Council to surrender the existing lease and enter into a new lease, the architect be authorised to prepare tender documentation, invite tenders from local contractors, receive tenders on the Council's behalf, prepare tender report and advise tenderers of outcome, for a sum of £550.00 plus VAT and disbursements (acceptance of the architects quotation previously approved by Council on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2004) and,

(3) subject to (2) above, the architect be advised of the requirements of the Kent County Council Health and Safety Advisor in respect of the buildings works, as set out in paragraph 6 (1) to (7) contained within the report and,

(4) the Clerk seek clarification on the likely cost of relocating the County Council's computer and printer, including the provision of additional trunking, wiring and sockets and including any professional fees and,

(5) a quotation be sought from BT to either re route the existing line or provide a new line, whichever is more expedient, to a box located in the new parish office and,

(6) the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman, be authorised to agree the head of agreement with the County Council and to refer the matter to the Council's solicitor.

#### **10. Donations**

The Committee considered a request for donations from the Kent Tree Warden Scheme and from the Winged Fellowship Trust.

RECOMMENDED: That, in accordance with powers under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, £100 be donated to Kent Tree Warden Scheme and £100 to the Winged Fellowship Trust.

#### **11. Dog bins**

The Committee considered a report on the provision of a dog bin on land at the junction of Hawthorns and Brambledown, which had been approved by Council at its meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2004 and noted that whilst the Council had no specific powers to erect a bin on land which is not in the ownership of the Council, it could however use powers under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOLVED: That, the expenditure of £9.00 to install a dog bin on amenity land located at the junction of Hawthorns and Brambledown and its subsequent weekly clearance at a cost of £3.50 per week, be authorised in accordance with powers under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

#### **12. Sale of land at Manor Field**

The Committee noted the course of action agreed by the Council at its meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2004.

#### **13. Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees**

The Committee considered a consultation document on a draft code of conduct for local government employees.

RESOLVED: That, the draft code be noted.

#### **14. Review of Political Restrictions**

The Committee considered a consultation document on a review of restrictions on the political activities of local authorities employees and pay of political assistants.

RESOLVED: That, the consultation document be noted.

#### **15. Dartford, Gravesham & Swanley Primary Health Care Trust**

(a) The Committee considered a consultation document on a draft food and health strategy for Dartford, Gravesham, Swanley entitled "Building Better Health Together".

RESOLVED: That, the consultation document be noted.

(b) The Committee received a report on the work of a new Steering Group set up to undertake a health needs assessment of the northern parishes in the Sevenoaks District. The Committee expressed some concerns that the membership of the Steering Group was restricted to the northern parishes within the Sevenoaks District and would have welcomed cross boundary involvement from parishes in both the Dartford and Gravesham areas in order to provide a cohesive approach to the delivery of health services in the surrounding locality.

RECOMMENDED: That, the Committee endorses the work of the Steering Group and approve this Council's commitment to distribute the surveys within the parish in support of the health needs assessment.

**16. Office equipment**

The Committee considered the Health and Safety requirements in respect of an employee's right to be provided with an appropriate eye and eyesight test and analysis of workstations for the purpose of assessing health and safety risks of employees.

RECOMMENDED: That, (1) the Council meet the cost of an annual eye and eyesight test for its employees, (2) any action to assess the health and safety risks associated with employees' workstations be deferred until the Parish Office has been relocated and, (3) the architect be made aware of these requirements.

**17. Date of the next meeting**

To be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 12.02 p.m.

Signed:.....  
Chairman of F & G P Committee

Date:.....

**Fidelity Guarantee Proposal Form**

<b>Name of Council : Hartley Parish Council</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Action</b>
(1) Please state (a) Total annual expenditure (b) Total number of employees Limit of indemnity required	£97,625.00 (budgeted expenditure for 2004/05) 2 £144,000	
(2) Give details (amount, date and nature) of any losses suffered during the past 5 years through fraud or dishonesty of employees. If NONE state NONE	None	No action required
(3) Before engaging any employee (other than school leavers) do you obtain satisfactory references covering the previous three years employment?	Yes	No action required
4) Will money received by the Council be passed to the Clerk (or to an employee authorised to receive such money) daily and banked within two banking days?	Yes	No action required. Already undertaken.

**APPENDIX 1**

<b>Name of Council : Hartley Parish Council</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Action</b>
(5) Will cash book entries and other records of money received be fully checked at least monthly against: the bank statement, receipt counterfoils, vouchers, supporting documents and cash in hand – all independently of the employees handling such records or money.	Yes	An independent check of the cash book receipt entries against the bank statement, paying in book counterfoils and the receipt books will be required on an monthly basis.
(6) Will all petty cash and unpaid wages be independently checked at least monthly	Yes	An independent check of the cash held in the petty cash against the vouchers will be required on a monthly basis
(7) Will all wages lists be checked independently for fictitious names and inflated amounts	Yes	No action required. Wages cheques are authorised by the Council at its monthly meetings
(8) Will all cheques drawn bear two manually applied signatures added after the amount has been inserted?	Yes	No action required. Already undertaken

**APPENDIX 1**

<b>Name of Council : Hartley Parish Council</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Action</b>
(9) When cheques are signed will supporting documents be examined independently of employees preparing cheques	Yes	No action required. All cheques are checked independently against invoices and other supporting documents by one of the authorised signatories to the Council's bank accounts before they are presented to Council at its monthly meetings for authorisation.
(10) Will there be an independent and physical check of all stock at least annually	Yes	The Parish Office does not hold any significant stock. The Pavilion holds a small stock of tables, chairs, crockery and cleaning equipment and materials. Establish an inventory of stock held in the Pavilion and carry out an independent check of stock on an annual basis.

**Minimum Standards of Control**

	<b>Action required</b>
<p><u>Auditors</u> The accounts of the Council shall be examined by external auditors every 12 months. All recommendations or alternatives acceptable to the auditors shall be implemented without delay</p>	<p>No action required. Already undertaken.</p>
<p><u>Cash Receipts</u> Employees receiving cash and cheques in the course of their duties shall be required to bank in full within two banking days</p>	<p>No action required. Already undertaken</p>
<p><u>Reconciliation</u> Independently of employees responsible, bank statements, receipts counterfoils and supporting documents shall be checked at least monthly against cash book entries and balances tested with cash and unpresented cheques</p>	<p>An independent check will be required on a monthly basis</p>

**APPENDIX 1**

	<b>Action required</b>
<p><u>Cheque signing</u> All cheques or other bank instruments shall require two manually applied signatures to be added after the amount and Payee have been inserted. The signatories shall also sign the cheques stub.</p> <p>No cheque or instrument must be signed until one signatory has examined the supporting documentation.</p> <p>All payments made to be reported monthly to the full Council</p>	<p>No action required. Already undertaken.</p> <p>No action required. All cheques are checked independently against invoices and other supporting documents by one of the authorised signatories to the Council's bank accounts before they are presented to Council at its monthly meetings for authorisation.</p> <p>No action required. Already undertaken.</p>
<p><u>Cash and petty cash</u> Cash in hand and petty cash shall be checked independently of employees responsible at least monthly</p>	<p>An independent check of petty cash held in the Parish Office against vouchers will be required on a monthly basis.</p>
<p><u>Payroll</u> The cast of the payroll will be subject to an independent check before payment to ensure that the total amount drawn is correct.</p>	<p>No action required. All wages cheques are presented to Council at its monthly meetings for approval.</p>
<p><u>Stocktaking</u> There will be a physical check on all stock and materials held against verified stock records independent of staff responsible at intervals of not more than twelve months.</p>	<p>There is no significant stock held in the Parish Office, therefore no action required. Establish an inventory of stock held in the Pavilion and check independently of staff on an annual basis.</p>

**APPENDIX 1**

	<b>Action required</b>
<p><u>Ordering goods</u> Prior approval of the Council must be obtained for any order of stock or materials of greater value than £50.</p>	<p>No action required. Procedures for the ordering of goods defined in the Council's financial regulation 10.1 to 10.4.</p>
<p><u>Computer security</u> Security checks will be built into all computer functions with reconciliations made as necessary</p>	<p>The two council computers do not have passwords. Computers are located in the Parish Office which is locked when members of staff leave the library building. Key holders to the Parish Office include the Clerk, Assistant Clerk, Chairman of the Council and Hartley Library. As the Council does not use electronic banking, reconciliations would be inappropriate.</p>